

The BioPark Plan: A Path Forward



City of Albuquerque, Cultural Services Department

Importance of the Albuquerque BioPark

- The BioPark is a Crown Jewel of New Mexico
- Most-visited destination in New Mexico every year, with a record 1.2 million visitors in FY12
- One of only 214 AZA (Association of Zoos and Aquariums) accredited facilities in the Country; most recently in 2010
- Vital for education, research and sustainability of 34 endangered and threatened species
- Offered 152 educational classes and workshops for youths and adults last year; welcomed nearly 80,000 students on field trips last year
- The popular Zoo to You program travels across New Mexico – More than 93,000 people attended Zoo to You programs
- Visitor satisfaction survey: Quality of visit is *Excellent* (70%) or *Good* (29%)
- Leader in many conservation programs: Snow Leopards; Asian Elephants; Mexican Gray Wolf; Silvery Minnow and more

Challenges for the BioPark

- BioPark is Aging (Zoo is 85 years old this year) – Aquarium/Botanic Garden 16 years old.
- There is no current master plan to guide BioPark's future.
- Priority has been on building new exhibits over the years which is vital for ongoing interest in the facility, however; not enough attention given to a meaningful maintenance program, primarily behind-the-scenes.
- There is a current backlog of \$18 million in deferred maintenance.
- More than 95 buildings and exhibits – all need on-going maintenance.
- The total costs to taxpayers of operating the BioPark is currently \$12 million of which only \$3.8 million comes from ticket revenues.

Current Conditions Requiring Maintenance



Solutions to Meet Challenges

In June 2011, Mayor Berry established a taskforce to look at current challenges facing the BioPark and to make recommendations for changes to the way the physical environment at BioPark is being built and maintained.

The taskforce was comprised of the BioPark Director, BioPark Managers, leadership from the Cultural Services Department, an outside facilities manager and private sector construction experts.

The taskforce worked for six months to survey existing conditions, policies and procedures with one goal in mind — ensuring a bright future for the Albuquerque BioPark while maintaining the BioPark as an integral and affordable part of our community for generations to come.

The following slides will show the recommendations from the taskforce.

Taskforce Recommendations

Update Master Plan for BioPark

- Issue Local & National Search/RFP for New and Updated Master Plan
- Inventory and Prioritize Current Underfunded Projects and Deferred Maintenance

Restructure How New Projects are Built and How Taxpayer Funded Capital Programs and Maintenance Programs are Operated

- Create a New In-House Maintenance Division and Enhance Maintenance Performance with Outside Contractors
- Put New Construction Projects over \$50k Out For Competitive Bid While Maintaining In-House Construction Specialties (Stone and Rock Work/Specialized Activities)
- Increase Admission Fees to Help Finance the Cost of Maintaining the BioPark. (\$3 is the increase for adult single-venue tickets – discount days have been added – see later slide for explanations and comparisons)

Financing of Deferred Maintenance Issues

- Prioritize Maintenance Projects in Upcoming GO Bond Cycles – 4 Cycles @ \$4.5 million Each Cycle (8 year plan); \$18 million

Establish New Master Plan

- Update the Master Plan to guide development of BioPark
- Zoo has not updated the Master Plan since the 1970s
- Aquarium and Botanic Garden since 1991
- Master plan will focus future development
 - Prioritize existing capital improvement projects
 - Prioritize future exhibits and growth
- RFP is ready to be released and the for a master plan facilitator will begin on August 31, 2012

Restructure the Way New Construction Projects and Maintenance are Performed

- Over the past 20 years, the BioPark has primarily financed new construction projects and maintenance through GO bond funding.
- Traditionally these projects have been constructed in-house with BioPark crews being shared between construction projects and maintenance — leading to less than optimal efficiencies in both activities.
- **Example:** Because crews were pulled away from day-to-day construction activities to perform maintenance; the recently completed elephant barn facility took in-house crews more than 3 years to construct at a cost of \$4.4 million for Phase 1. An independent estimate of the project timeline and cost has been completed which indicates that the project could have been completed in 10 to 12 months at a cost of \$3.5 million by an outside contractor.
- In-house crews could have then concentrated on maintenance and specialty construction work at the exhibits (see next slide for explanation).

Create a Proactive Maintenance Program

- Create a new facility maintenance team of 24 full time crew members to proactively maintain all four facilities (Zoo, Botanical Garden, Aquarium, Tingley Beach).
- Move some of the current construction staff to vacant positions in other departments within the city. This means better service to taxpayers citywide – without layoffs.
- Offer more value to the taxpayer through efficiently utilizing more private sector contractors while keeping options open for specialized projects to be performed in-house.
- Annual cost of specialized in-house maintenance crew is \$906,190 to be offset by admission fees.

Address Deferred Maintenance

- The BioPark is facing \$18 million in deferred maintenance based on a well documented and prioritized list of projects.
- To catch up on deferred maintenance it is recommended that a funding plan is implemented through future GO bond cycles.
 - Estimated \$4.5 million per cycle – next four cycles (\$18 million by the year 2019).
- New and large deferred maintenance projects will be performed by private sector contractors through competitive bidding processes.
- Deferred maintenance projects and incomplete CIP projects will be prioritized through the new Master Plan.

Increase Admission Fees

Understanding that the BioPark must be properly maintained in order to stay viable as the State's most visited attraction, and that the welfare of the animals is paramount — the taskforce recommends bringing the regular adult admission price for single attractions up to the price of a movie ticket.

	Regular		Combo	
	Current	Proposed	Current	Proposed
Adult	\$7.00	\$10.00	\$12.00	\$16.00
Child/Senior	\$3.00	\$4.50	\$5.00	\$6.50

- This will alleviate pressure on the general fund and will generate \$1.3 million to create the maintenance team and pay for maintenance materials.
- Note: First time in 10 years that the cost of a single-venue admission ticket has increased. Field trip rates of \$1.50 per child remain the same. Even with this increase, BioPark admission will still be less than similar facilities in the Southwest and other local entertainment venues (see next chart).

New Admission Fee Comparison

	Adult	Child	Senior
BioPark (new fees)	\$10.00	\$4.50	\$4.50
El Paso Zoo	\$10.00	\$6.00	\$7.50
Houston Zoo	\$13.00	\$9.00	\$7.00
Henry Doorly Zoo (Omaha)	\$13.50	\$9.00	\$12.50
Dallas Zoo	\$12.00	\$9.00	\$9.00
Denver Zoo	\$15.00	\$10.00	\$12.00
San Francisco Zoo	\$15.00	\$9.00	\$12.00
Los Angeles Zoo	\$16.00	\$11.00	\$13.00
Denver Aquarium	\$16.99	\$9.99	\$14.99
Phoenix Zoo	\$20.00	\$10.00	\$20.00
Dallas Aquarium	\$20.95	\$12.95	\$16.95

New Admission Fee Comparison

	Adult	Child	Senior
BioPark	\$10.00	\$4.50	\$4.50
Movie Cost - Century Rio 24	\$10.50	\$7.00	\$7.00
XD	\$13.00	\$10.00	\$10.00
XD RealD 3D	\$15.00	\$11.50	\$11.50
New Mexico State Fair	\$10.00	\$7.00	\$7.00
New Mexico State Fair-Daily Ride Pass	\$20-\$25	\$20-\$25	\$20-\$25
Cliff's Combo Pass	\$29.95	\$29.95	\$29.95
Isotopes Game Day Tickets	\$7- \$25	\$7- \$25	\$7- \$25

Admission Discount Days

Understanding that the BioPark needs to be viable while still offering opportunities for education and entertainment to all Albuquerque citizens, the taskforce is recommending that for the first time ever, the BioPark will offer half off days.

Four times a year, including weekends, tickets to the BioPark will be less costly than ever before.

The BioPark welcomes nearly 80,000 students each year for field trips. The price for student fields trips will remain at \$1.50 per child.

Additional Exciting News at the BioPark

In addition to an updated master plan and a new way of building and maintaining the BioPark, the City will be issuing two new requests for proposal from private sector firms to add enterprise attractions at the zoo. The first will be an RFP for a ropes course to allow for team building and adventure training. The second will be for a new view of your Zoo! Visitors will enjoy the thrill of being lifted in an open-air chairlift to spectacular tree-top views of exhibits and animals.



Both attractions will be privately operated and maintained on the zoo grounds with a city profit sharing component. Costs for the attractions for those who choose to participate have yet to be determined.

Why Take Action – Why Now?

The methods of maintaining and constructing new exhibits at the BioPark have not changed for years and we find ourselves in a situation in which we are not using taxpayer resources as efficiently as possible and the BioPark is aging and in need of maintenance. If we fail to come together as a community and act now, there will be long-term negative consequences.

- Poorly maintained facilities may no longer lead to the BioPark being the top destination in state
- We will deplete our balance of bond funding for repairs and renovations to zero by the end of 2012
- There may be a need to reduce operational hours and days or reduce our animal population
- The potential exists to lose important future AZA accreditation status
- See a decline in the quality of the experience for visitors and quality of life for our animal population

If We Act the BioPark Will Thrive

- We will continue to be a world class, affordable attraction
- We will improve infrastructure while using bond funding more efficiently
- We will address deferred maintenance backlog and become a more well-maintained facility with proactive maintenance plan
- We will build projects on time and budget with high-quality construction and warranties at a reduced cost to taxpayers
- We will have a new master plan to guide development and investment in the facilities and to grow the attendance at the BioPark
- We will provide an exciting future for citizens and visitors to the BioPark